

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Friday, August 18, 2006

GOVERNOR BARBOUR TO CALL SPECIAL LEGISLATIVE SESSION

JACKSON, Mississippi -- Governor Haley Barbour announced today he will call a special session of the Mississippi Legislature to convene at 9 a.m. on Thursday, August 24, 2006, and deal primarily with a huge job-creating project in northwest Mississippi known as Riverbend Crossing.

“This enormous development will include unique, branded tourist attractions and convention facilities that will benefit not only northwest Mississippi but also the entire state,” Governor Barbour said. “The state is pleased to join with local governments in DeSoto County in providing these modest incentives for the project to be located in our state.”

Governor Barbour said certain elements of the proposed Riverbend Crossing project, which includes a Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Company (MGM) entertainment district, require legislative action before they can go forward. Riverbend is a 4,500-acre multi-phase master planned community that will consist of a blend of commercial, recreational, resort, tourism and residential development.

Developers have stated their intention to invest \$2.7 billion over 15 years. In the first phase, in return for state support, developers have committed a minimum capital investment of \$475 million and creation of a minimum of 3,500 new, full-time jobs.

Governor Barbour said he will ask the Legislature to approve \$23 million for public infrastructure – roads, water and sewer – to serve the project. He said he will also seek approval for a tourism sales tax rebate that is limited to 30 percent of capital expenditures for each eligible project investment for 10 years. This sales tax rebate will equal 80 percent of the sales tax collected from each eligible project under a total rebate ceiling of \$150 million for the Riverbend project.

The Governor’s proposal to the Legislature will include protections for the state’s interests and remedies if the developer fails to perform according to detailed terms being developed and signed before construction begins. For example, if projects do not meet investment requirements, they will not qualify for sales tax rebates.

The Governor said he is also working with the leadership of the House and Senate, including the Speaker and Lieutenant Governor and chairmen of the House Ways and Means Committee and Senate Finance Committee, on other issues that he may consider adding to the call if appropriate.

#